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ORATION

Pronounced at Cambridge,

BEFORE

THE SOCIETY OF PHI BETA KAPPA.

AUGUST 27, 1824.



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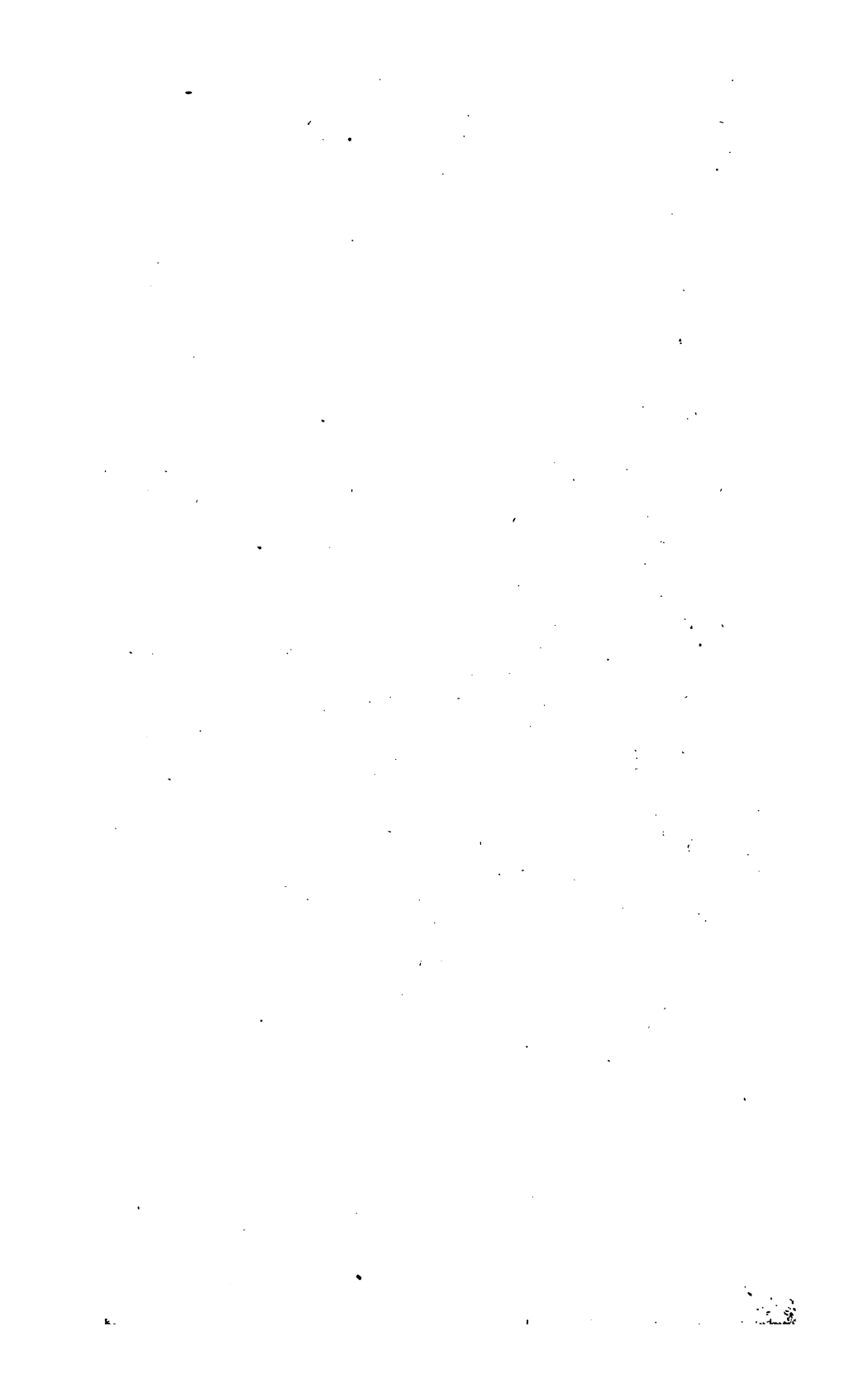
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TO MAJOR GENERAL

LA FAYETTE,

THIS Oration, delivered in his presence, is respectfully and affectionately dedicated by

THE AUTHOR.



ORATION.

MR. PRESIDENT, AND GENTLEMEN,

IN discharging the honourable trust of being the public organ of your sentiments on this occasion, I have been anxious that the hour, which we here pass together, should be occupied by those reflections exclusively, which belong to us as scholars. Our association in this fraternity is academical; we engaged in it before our alma mater dismissed us from her venerable roof, to wander in the various paths of life; and we have now come together in the academical holidays, from every variety of pursuit, from almost every part of our country, to meet on common ground, as the brethren of one literary household. The professional cares of life, like the conflicting tribes of Greece, have proclaimed to us a short armistice, that we may come up in peace to our Olympia.

But from the wide field of literary speculation, and the innumerable subjects of meditation which arise in it, a selection must be made. And it has seemed to me proper that we should direct our thoughts, not merely to a subject of interest to scholars, but to one, which may recommend itself as peculiarly appropriate to us. If 'that old man eloquent, whom the dishonest victory at Cheronæa killed with report,' could devote fifteen years to the composition of his Panegyric on Athens, I shall need no excuse to a society of American scholars, in choosing for the theme of an address on an occasion like this, *the peculiar motives to intellectual exertion in America*. In this subject that curiosity, which every scholar feels in tracing

and comparing the springs of mental activity, is heightened and dignified, by the important connexion of the inquiry with the condition and prospects of our native land.

In the full comprehension of the terms, the motives to intellectual exertion in a country embrace the most important springs of national character. Pursued into its details, the study of these springs of national character is often little better than fanciful speculation. The questions, why Asia has almost always been the abode of despotism; and Europe more propitious to liberty; why the Egyptians were abject and melancholy; the Greeks inventive, elegant, and versatile; the Romans stern, saturnine, and, in matters of literature, for the most part servile imitators of a people, whom they conquered, despised, and never equalled; why tribes of barbarians from the north and east, not known to differ essentially from each other at the time of their settlement in Europe, should have laid the foundation of national characters so dissimilar as those of the Spanish, French, German, and English nations; these are questions to which a few general answers may be attempted, that will probably be just and safe, only in proportion as they are vague and comprehensive. Difficult as it is, even in the individual man, to point out precisely the causes, under the influence of which members of the same community and of the same family, placed apparently in the same circumstances, grow up with characters the most diverse; it is infinitely more difficult to perform the same analysis on a subject so vast as a nation; where it is first not a small question what the character is, before you touch the inquiry into the circumstances by which it was formed.

But as, in the case of individual character, there are certain causes of undisputed and powerful operation; there are also in national character causes equally undisputed, of improvement and excellence on the one hand, and of degeneracy and decline on the other. The philosophical student of history, the *impartial* observer of man, may often fix on circum-

stances, which in their operation on the minds of the people, in furnishing the motives and giving the direction to intellectual exertion, have had the chief agency in making them what they were or are. Nor are there many exercises of the speculative principle more elevated than this. It is in the highest degree curious to trace physical facts into their political, intellectual, and moral consequences; and to show how the climate, the geographical position, and even the particular topography of a region connect themselves by evident association, with the state of society, its predominating pursuits, and characteristic institutions.

In the case of other nations, particularly of those which in the great drama of the world have long since passed from the stage, these speculations are often only curious. The operation of a tropical climate in enervating and fitting a people for despotism; the influence of a broad river or a lofty chain of mountains, in arresting the march of conquest or of emigration, and thus becoming the boundary not merely of governments, but of languages, literature, institutions, and character; the effect of a quarry of fine marble on the progress of the liberal arts; the agency of popular institutions in promoting popular eloquence, and the tremendous reaction of popular eloquence on the fortunes of a state; the comparative destiny of colonial settlements, of insular states, of tribes fortified in nature's Alpine battlements, or scattered over a smiling region of olive gardens and vineyards; these are all topics indeed of rational curiosity and liberal speculation, but important only as they may illustrate the prospects of our own country.

It is therefore when we turn the inquiry to our country, when we survey its features, search its history, and contemplate its institutions, to see what the motives are, which are to excite and guide the minds of the people; when we dwell not on a distant, an uncertain, an almost forgotten past; but on an impending future, teeming with life and action, toward

which we are rapidly and daily swept forward, and with which we stand in the dearest connexion, which can bind the generations of man together; a future, which our own characters, our own actions, our own principles will do something to stamp with glory or shame; it is then that the inquiry becomes practical, momentous, and worthy the attention of every patriotic scholar. We then strive, as far as it is in the power of philosophical investigation to do it, to unfold our country's reverend auspices, to cast its great horoscope in the national sky, where many stars are waning, and many have set; to ascertain whether the soil which we love, as that where our fathers are laid and we shall presently be laid with them, will be trod in times to come by a people virtuous, enlightened, and free.

The first of the circumstances which are acting and will continue to act, with a strong peculiarity among us, and which must prove one of the most powerful influences, in exciting and directing the intellect of the country, is the new form of civil society, which has here been devised and established. I shall not wander so far from the *literary* limits of this occasion, nor into a field so oft trodden, as the praises of free political institutions. But the direct and appropriate influence on mental effort, of institutions like ours, has not yet, perhaps, received the attention, which, from every American scholar, it richly deserves. I have ventured to say, that a new form of civil society has here been devised and established. The ancient Grecian republics, indeed, were free enough within the walls of the single city, of which most of them were wholly or chiefly composed; but to these single cities the freedom, as well as the power, was confined. Toward the confederated or tributary states, the government was generally a despotism, more capricious and not less stern, than that of a single tyrant. Rome as a state was never free; in every period of her history, authentic and dubious, royal, republican, and imperial, her proud citizens were the slaves of an artful, accomplished, *wealthy aristocracy*; and nothing but the hard fought

battles of her stern tribunes can redeem her memory to the friends of liberty. In ancient and modern history there is no example, before our own, of a purely elective and representative system. It is therefore, on an entirely novel plan, that, in this country, the whole direction and influence of affairs; all the trusts and honours of society; the power of making, abrogating, and administering the laws; the whole civil authority and sway, from the highest post in the government to the smallest village trust, are put directly into the market of merit. Whatsoever efficacy there is in high station and exalted honours, to call out and exercise the powers, either by awakening the emulation of the aspirants or exciting the efforts of the incumbents, is here directly exerted on the largest mass of men, with the smallest possible deductions. Nothing is bestowed on the chance of birth, nothing depends on proximity to the fountain of honour, nothing is to be acquired by espousing hereditary family interests; but whatever is desired must be sought in the way of a broad, fair, personal competition. It requires little argument to show, that such a system must most widely and most powerfully have the effect of appealing to whatever of energy the land contains; of searching out, with magnetic instinct, in the remotest quarters, the latent ability of its children.

It may be objected, and it has been, that for want of an hereditary government, we lose that powerful spring of action which resides in the patronage of such a government, and must emanate from the crown. With many individuals, friendly to our popular institutions, it is nevertheless an opinion, that we must consent to lose something of the genial influence of princely and royal patronage on letters and arts, and find our consolation in the political benefits of our free system. It may be doubted, however, whether this view be not entirely false. A crown is in itself a strip of velvet set with jewels; the dignity which it imparts and the honour with which it is invested, depend on the numbers, resources, and intelligence of the

people who permit it to be worn. The crown of the late Emperor of Hayti is said to have been one of the most brilliant in the world; and Theodore of Corsica, while confined for debt in the Fleet in London, sat on as high a throne as the king of England. Since then the power and influence of the crown are really in the people, it seems preposterous to say, that what increases the importance of the people can diminish the effect of that, which proceeds from them, depends upon them, and reverts to them. Sovereignty, in all its truth and efficacy, exists here, as much as ever it did at London, at Paris, at Rome, or at Susa. It exists, it is true, in an equal proportionate diffusion; a part of it belongs to the humblest citizen. The error seems to be in confounding the idea of sovereignty, with the quality of an individual sovereign. Wheresoever Providence gathers into a nation the tribes of men, there a social life, with its energies and functions, is conferred; and this social life is sovereignty. By the healthful action of our representative system, it is made to pervade the empire like the air; to reach the farthest, descend to the lowest, and bind the distant together; it is made not only to co-operate with the successful and assist the prosperous, but to cheer the remote, 'to remember the forgotten, to attend to the neglected, to visit the forsaken.' Before the rising of our republic in the world, the faculties of men have had but one weary pilgrimage to perform—to travel up to court. By an improvement on the Jewish polity, which enjoined on the nation a visit thrice a year to the holy city; the great, the munificent, the enlightened states of the ancient and modern world have required a constant residence on the chosen spot. *Provincial* has become another term for inferior and rude; and *unpolite*, which once meant only *rural*, has got to signify, in all our languages, something little better than barbarous. But since, in the nature of things, a small part only of the population of a large state can, by physical possibility, be crowded within the walls of a city, and there receive the genial beams of metro-

politan favour, it follows that the great mass of men are cut off from the operation of some of the strongest excitements to exertion. It is rightfully urged then, as a great advantage of our system, that the excitements of society go down as low as its burdens, and search out and bring forward whatsoever of ability and zeal are comprehended within the limits of the land. This is but the beginning of the benefit, or rather it is not yet the benefit. It is the effect of this diffusion of privileges that is precious. Capacity and opportunity, the twin sisters, who can scarce subsist but with each other, are now brought together. The people who are to choose, and from whose number are to be chosen, by their neighbours, the highest officers of state, infallibly feel an impulse to mental activity; they read, think, and compare; they found village schools, they collect social libraries, they prepare their children for the higher establishments of education. The world, I think, has been abused on the tendency of institutions perfectly popular. From the ill-organized states of antiquity, terrific examples of license and popular misrule are quoted, to prove that man requires to be protected from himself, without asking who is to protect him from the protector, himself also a man. While from the very first settlement of America to the present day, the most prominent trait of our character has been to cherish and diffuse the means of education. The village school-house, and the village church, are the monuments which the American people have erected to their freedom; to read, and write, and think, are the licentious practices, which have characterized our democracy.

But it will be urged perhaps, that, though the effect of our institutions be to excite the intellect of the nation, they excite it too much in a political direction; that the division and subdivision of the country into states and districts, and the equal diffusion throughout them of political privileges and powers, whatever favourable effect in other ways they may produce, are attended by this evil,—that

they kindle a politic alambition, where it would not and ought not be felt ; and particularly that they are unfriendly in their operation on literature, as they call the aspiring youth, from the patient and laborious vigils of the student, to plunge prematurely into the conflicts of the Forum. It may, however, be doubted, whether there be any foundation whatever for a charge like this ; and whether the fact, so far as it is one, that the talent and ambition of the country incline, at present, to a political course, be not owing to causes wholly unconnected, with the free character of our institutions. It need not be said that the administration of the government of a country, whether it be liberal or despotic, is the first thing to be provided for. Some persons must be employed in making and administering the laws, before any other interest can receive attention. Our fathers, the pilgrims, before they left the vessel, in which for five months they had been tossed on the ocean, before setting foot on the new world of their desire, drew up a simple constitution of government. As this is the first care in the order of nature, it ever retains its paramount importance. Society must be preserved in its constituted forms, or there is no safety for life, no security for property, no permanence for any institution civil, moral, or religious.—The first efforts then of social men are of necessity political. Apart from every call of ambition, honourable or selfish, of interest enlarged or mercenary, the care of the government is the first care of a civilized community. In the early stages of social progress, where there is little property and a scanty population the whole strength of the society must be employed in its support and defence. Though *we* are constantly receding from these stages we have not wholly left them. Even our rapidly increasing population is and will for some time remain small, compared with the space over which it is diffused ; and this, with the total absence of large hereditary fortunes, will create a demand for political services, *on the one hand*, and a necessity of rendering them

on the other. There is then no ground for ascribing the political tendency of the talent and activity of this country, to an imagined incompatibility of popular institutions with the profound cultivation of letters. Suppose our government were changed tomorrow; that the five points of a stronger government were introduced, an hereditary sovereign, an order of nobility, an established church, a standing army, and a vigilant police; and that these should take place of that admirable system, which now, like the genial air, pervades all, supports all, cheers all, and is nowhere seen. Suppose this change made, and other circumstances to remain the same; our population no more dense, our boundaries as wide, and the accumulation of private wealth no more abundant. Would there, in the new state of things, be less interest in politics? By the terms of the supposition, the leading class of the community, the nobles, are to be politicians by birth. By the nature of the case, a large portion of the remainder, who gain their livelihood by their industry and talents, would be engrossed, not indeed in the free political competition, which now prevails, but in pursuing the interests of rival court factions. One class only, the peasantry, would remain, which would take less interest in politics than the corresponding class in a free state; or rather, this is a new class, which invariably comes in with a strong government; and no one can seriously think the cause of science and literature would be promoted, by substituting a European peasantry, in the place of, perhaps, the most substantial uncorrupted population on earth, the American yeomanry. Moreover the evil in question is with us a self-correcting evil. If the career of politics be more open, and the temptation to crowd it stronger, competition will spring up, numbers will engage in the pursuit; the less able, the less industrious, the less ambitious must retire, and leave the race to the swift and the battle to the strong. But in hereditary governments no such remedy exists.—One class of society, by the nature of its position,

must be rulers, magistrates, or politicians. Weak or strong, willing or unwilling, they must play the game, though they as well as the people pay the bitter forfeit. The obnoxious king can seldom shake off the empoisoned purple; he must wear the crown of thorns, till it is struck off at the scaffold; and the same artificial necessity has obliged generations of nobles, in all the old states of Europe, to toil and bleed for a

Power too great to keep or to resign.

Where the compulsion stops short of these afflicting extremities, still, under the governments in question, a large portion of the community is unavoidably destined to the calling of the courtier, the soldier, the party retainer; to a life of service, intrigue, and court attendance; and thousands, and those the prominent individuals in society, are brought up to look on a livelihood gained by private industry as base; on study as the pedant's trade; on labour as the badge of slavery. I look in vain in institutions like these, for any thing essentially favourable to intellectual progress. On the contrary, while they must draw away the talent and ambition of the country, quite as much as popular institutions can do it, into pursuits foreign from the culture of the intellect, they necessarily doom to obscurity no small part of the mental energy of the land. For that mental energy has been equally diffused by sterner travellers than ever marched in the van of a Revolution; the nature of man and the Providence of God. Native character, strength and quickness of mind, are not of the number of distinctions and accomplishments, that human institutions can monopolize within a city's walls. In quiet times, they remain and perish in the obscurity, to which a false organization of society consigns them. In dangerous, convulsed, and trying times, they spring up in the fields, in the village hamlets, and on the mountain tops, and teach the surprised favourites of human law, that bright eyes, *skilful* hands, quick perceptions, firm purpose, and

brave hearts, are not the exclusive *appanage* of courts. Our popular institutions are favourable to intellectual improvement, because their foundation is in dear nature. They do not consign the greater part of the social frame to torpidity and mortification. They send out a vital nerve to every member of the community, by which its talent and power, great or small, are brought into living conjunction and strong sympathy with the kindred intellect of the nation; and every impression on every part vibrates with electric rapidity through the whole. They encourage nature to perfect her work; they make education, the soul's nutriment, cheap; they bring up remote and shrinking talent into the cheerful field of competition; in a thousand ways they provide an audience for lips, which nature has touched with persuasion; they put a lyre into the hands of genius; they bestow on all who deserve it or seek it, the only patronage worth having, the only patronage that ever struck out a spark of 'celestial fire,'—the patronage of fair opportunity. This is a day of improved education; new systems of teaching are devised; modes of instruction, choice of studies, adaptation of text books, the whole machinery of means, have been brought in our day under severe revision. But were I to attempt to point out the most efficacious and comprehensive improvement in education, the engine, by which the greatest portion of mind could be brought and kept under cultivation, the discipline which would reach farthest, sink deepest, and cause the word of instruction not to spread over the surface like an artificial hue, carefully laid on, but to penetrate to the heart and soul of its objects, it would be popular institutions. Give the people an object in promoting education, and the best methods will infallibly be suggested by that instinctive ingenuity of our nature, which provides means for great and precious ends. Give the people an object in promoting education, and the worn hand of labour will be opened to the last farthing, that its children may enjoy means denied to itself. This great contest about

black boards and sand tables will then lose something of its importance, and even the exalted names of Bell and Lancaster may sink from that very lofty height, where an over hasty admiration has placed them.

But though it be conceded us that the tendency, which is alleged to exist in this country toward the political career, is not a vicious effect of our free institutions, still it may be inquired, whether the new form of social organization among us is at least to produce no corresponding modification of our literature? As the country advances, as the population becomes denser, as wealth accumulates, as the various occasions of a large, prosperous, and polite community call into strong action and vigorous competition the literary talent of the country, will no peculiar form or direction be given to its literature, by the nature of its institutions? To this question an answer must, without hesitation, be given in the affirmative. Literature, as well in its origin as in its true and only genuine character, is but a more perfect communication of man with man and mind with mind. It is a grave, sustained, deliberate utterance of fact, of opinion, and feeling; or a free and happy reflection of nature, of character, or of manners; and if it be not these it is poor imitation. It may, therefore, be assumed as certain, that the peculiarity of our condition and institutions will be reflected in some peculiarity of our literature; but what that shall be it is as yet too early to say.* Literary history informs us of many studies, which have been neglected as dangerous to existing governments; and many others which have been cultivated because they were pru-

* The peculiar natural features of the American Continent are of themselves sufficient to produce some strong peculiarity in its literature, but this topic is comprehensive and curious enough for a separate Essay. It has, I am permitted to say, been made the subject of one, by M. de Salazar, the minister from the Colombian Republic to the United States, which will shortly be presented to the friends of American letters. An essay on such a subject, from an accomplished citizen of a free State, established in the kingdom of Nueva Granada, is itself an admirable illustration of the genial influence of popular institutions on Intellectual Improvement.

dent and safe. We have hardly the means of settling from analogy, what direction the mind will most decisively take, when left under strong excitements to action, wholly without restraint from the arm of power. It is impossible to anticipate what garments our native muses will weave for themselves. To foretell our literature would be to create it. There was a time before an epic poem, a **tragedy**, or an historical composition had ever been produced by the wit of man. It was a time of vast and powerful empires, of populous and wealthy cities. But these new and beautiful forms of human thought and feeling all sprang up in Greece, under the *stimulus* of her free institutions. Before they appeared in the world, it would have been idle for the philosopher to form conjectures, as to the direction, which the kindling genius of the age was to assume. He who could form, could and would realize the anticipation, and it would cease to be an anticipation. Assuredly epic poetry was invented then, and not before, when the gorgeous vision of the Iliad, not in its full detail of circumstance, but in the dim conception of its leading scenes and sterner features, burst into the soul of Homer. Impossible, indeed, were the task fully to read the auspices of the mind, under the influence of institutions as new, as peculiar, and far more animating, than those of Greece. But if, as no one will deny, our political system bring more minds into action on equal terms, if it provide a prompter circulation of thought throughout the community, if it give weight and emphasis to more voices, if it swell to tens of thousands and millions those 'sons of emulation, who crowd the narrow strait where honour travels,' then it seems not too much to foretell some peculiarity at least, if we may not call it improvement, in that literature, which is but the voice and utterance of all this mental action. There is little doubt that the instrument of communication itself will receive great improvements; that the written and spoken language will acquire force and power; possibly, that forms of address, wholly new, will be struck out, to meet the

universal demand for new energy. When the improvement and the invention (whatever it be) comes, it will come unlooked for, as well to its happy author as the world. But where great interests are at stake, great concerns rapidly succeeding each other, depending on almost innumerable wills, and yet requiring to be apprehended in a glance, and explained in a word; where movements are to be given to a vast empire, not by transmitting orders, but by diffusing opinions, exciting feelings, and touching the electric chord of sympathy, there language and expression will become intense, and the old processes of communication must put on a vigour and a directness, adapted to the aspect of the times. Our country is called, as it is, practical; but this is the element for intellectual action. No strongly marked and high toned literature, poetry, eloquence, or ethics, ever appeared but in the pressure, the din, and crowd of great interests, great enterprises, perilous risks, and dazzling rewards. Statesmen, and warriors, and poets, and orators, and artists, start up under one and the same excitement. They are all branches of one stock. They form, and cheer, and stimulate, and, what is worth all the rest, understand each other; and it is as truly the sentiment of the student, in the recesses of his cell, as of the soldier in the ranks, which breathes in the exclamation:

To all the sons of sense proclaim,
 One glorious hour of *crowded life*
 Is worth an age without a name.

But we are brought back to the unfavourable aspect of the subject, by being reminded out of history of the splendid patronage, which arbitrary governments have bestowed on letters, and which, from the nature of the case, can hardly be extended even to the highest merit, under institutions like our own.—We are told of the munificent pensions, the rich establishments, the large foundations; of the museums erected, the libraries gathered, the endowments *granted*, by Ptolemies, Augustuses, and Louises of an-

cient and modern days. We are asked to remark the fruit of this noble patronage; wonders of antiquarian or scientific lore, Thesauruses and Corpuses, efforts of erudition from which the emulous student, who would read all things, weigh all things, surpass all things, recoils in horror; volumes and shelves of volumes, before which meek-eyed Patience folds her hands in despair.

When we have contemplated these things, and turn our thoughts back to our poor republican land, to our frugal treasury, and the caution with which it is dispensed; to our modest fortunes, and the thrift with which they are hoarded; to our scanty public libraries, and the plain brick walls within which they are deposited: we may be apt to form gloomy auguries of the influence of free political institutions on our literature. It is important then, that we examine more carefully the experience of former ages, and see how far their institutions, as they have been more or less popular, have been more or less associated with displays of intellectual excellence. When we make this examination, we shall be gratified to find, that the precedents are all in favour of liberty. The greatest efforts of human genius have been made, where the nearest approach to free institutions has taken place. There shone not forth one ray of intellectual light, to cheer the long and gloomy ages of the Memphian and Babylonian despots. Not an historian, not an orator, not a poet is heard of in their annals. When you ask, what was achieved by the generations of thinking beings, the millions of men, whose natural genius was as bright as that of the Greeks, nay, who forestalled the Greeks in the first invention of many of the arts, you are told that they built the pyramids of Memphis, the temples of Thebes, and the tower of Babylon, and carried Sesostris and Ninus upon their shoulders, from the West of Africa to the Indus. Mark the contrast in Greece. With the first emerging of that country into the light of political liberty, the poems of Homer appear. Some centuries of political misrule and literary dark-

ness follow, and then the great constellation of their geniuses seems to rise at once. The stormy eloquence and the deep philosophy, the impassioned drama and the grave history, were all produced for the entertainment of that 'fierce democratie' of Athens. Here then the genial influence of liberty on letters is strongly put to the test. Athens was certainly a free state; free to licentiousness, free to madness. The rich were arbitrarily pillaged to defray the expenses of the state, the great were banished to appease the envy of their rivals, the wise sacrificed to the fury of the populace. It was a state, in short, where liberty existed with most of the imperfections, which have led men to love and praise despotism. Still, however, it was for this lawless, merciless people, that the most chastised and accomplished literature, which the world has known, was produced. The philosophy of Plato was the attraction, which drew to a morning's walk in the olive gardens of the academy, the young men of this factious city. Those tumultuous assemblies of Athens, the very same, which rose in their wrath, and to a man, and clamored for the blood of Phocion, required to be addressed, not in the cheap extemporaneous rant of modern demagogues, but in the elaborate and thrice repeated orations of Demosthenes. No! the noble and elegant arts of Greece grew up in no Augustan age, enjoyed neither royal nor imperial patronage. Unknown before in the world, strangers on the Nile, and strangers on the Euphrates, they sprang at once into life in a region not unlike our own New England—iron-bound, steril, and free. The imperial astronomers of Chaldæa went up almost to the stars in their observatories; but it was a Greek, who first foretold an eclipse, and measured the year. The nations of the East invented the alphabet, but not a line has reached us of profane literature, in any of their languages; and it is owing to the embalming power of Grecian genius, that the invention itself has been transmitted to the world. The Egyptian architects *could erect structures*, which after three thousand

five hundred years are still standing, in their uncouth original majesty; but it was only on the barren soil of Attica, that the beautiful columns of the Parthenon and the Theseum could rest, which are standing also. With the decline of liberty in Greece, began the decline of all her letters and all her arts; though her tumultuous democracies were succeeded by liberal and accomplished princes. Compare the literature of the Alexandrian with that of the Periclean age; how cold, pedantic, and imitative! Compare, I will not say, the axes, the eggs, the altars, and the other frigid devices of the pensioned wits in the museum at Alexandria, but compare their best spirits with those of independent Greece; Callimachus with Pindar, Lycophron with Sophocles, Aristophanes of Byzantium with Aristotle, and Apollonius the Rhodian with Homer. When we descend to Rome, to the Augustan age, the exalted era of Mæcenas, we find one uniform work of imitation, often of translation. The choicest geniuses seldom rise beyond a happy transfusion of the Grecian masters. Horace translates Alcæus, Terence translates Menander, Lucretius translates Epicurus, Virgil translates Homer, and Cicero—I had almost said—translates Demosthenes and Plato. But the soul of liberty did burst forth from the lips of Cicero, ‘her form had not yet lost all its original brightness,’ her inspiration produced in him the only specimens of a purely original literature, which Rome has transmitted to us. After him, their literary history is written in one line of Tacitus; *gliscente adulatione, magna ingenia deterrebantur*. The fine arts revived a little under the princes of the Flavian house, but never rose higher than a successful imitation of the waning excellence of Greece. With the princes of this line, the arts of Rome expired, and Constantine the great was obliged to tear down an arch of Trajan for sculptures, wherewithal to adorn his own. In modern times civilized states have multiplied; political institutions have varied in different states, and at different times in the same state; some liberal institutions have ex-

isted in the bosom of societies otherwise despotic; and a great addition of new studies has been made to the encyclopædia, which have all been cultivated by great minds, and some of which, as the physical and experimental sciences, have little or no direct connexion with the state of liberty. These circumstances perplex, in some degree, the inquiry into the effect of free institutions on intellectual improvement in modern times. There are times and places, where it would seem, that the muses, both the gay and the severe, had been transformed into court ladies. Upon the whole, however, the modern history of literature bears but a cold testimony to the genial influence of the governments under which it has grown up. Dante and Petrarch composed their beautiful works in exile; Boccaccio complains in the most celebrated of his, that he was transfixed with the darts of envy and calumny; Machiavelli was pursued by the party of the Medici for resisting their tyrannical designs; Guicciardini retired in disgust to compose his history in voluntary exile; Galileo confessed in the prisons of the Inquisition that the earth did not move; Ariosto lived in poverty; and Tasso died in want and despair.* Cervantes, after he had immortalized himself in his great work, was obliged to write on for bread. The whole French academy was pensioned to crush the great Corneille. Racine, after living to see his finest pieces derided as cold and worthless, died of a broken heart. The divine genius of Shakspeare raised him to no higher rank than that of a subaltern actor in his own, and Ben Jonson's plays. The immortal Chancellor was sacrificed to the preservation of a worthless minion, and is said, (falsely I trust,) to have begged a cup of beer in his old age, and begged it in vain. The most valuable of the pieces of Selden were written in that famous resort of great minds, the tower of London. Milton, surprised by want in his infirm old age, sold the first production of the human mind for five pounds. The great boast of English philosophy was

* *Martinelli*, in his edition of the *Decamerone*, cited in the Introduction to *Sidney's Discourses on Government*, edition of 1751, p. 34.

expelled from his place in Oxford, and kept in banishment, 'the king having been given to understand' to use the words of Lord Sunderland, who ordered the expulsion, 'that *one Locke* has, upon several occasions, behaved himself very factiously against the government.' Dryden sacrificed his genius to the spur of immediate want. Otway was choked with a morsel of bread, too ravenously swallowed after a long fast. Johnson was taken to prison for a debt of five shillings; and Burke petitioned for a Professorship at Glasgow and was denied. When we survey these facts and the innumerable others, of which these are not even an adequate specimen, we may perhaps conclude that, in whatever way the arbitrary governments of Europe have encouraged letters, it has not been in that of a steady cheering patronage. We may think there is abundant reason to acknowledge, that the ancient lesson is confirmed by modern experience, that popular institutions are most propitious to the full and prosperous growth of intellectual excellence.

If the perfectly organized system of liberty, which here prevails, be thus favourable to intellectual progress, various other conditions of our national existence are not less so, particularly the extension of one language, government, and character, over so vast a space as the United States of America. Hitherto, in the main, the world has seen but two forms of social existence, free governments in small states, and arbitrary governments in large ones. Though various shades of both have appeared, at different times, in the world, yet on the whole, the political ingenuity of man has never found out the mode of extending liberal institutions beyond small districts, or of governing large empires, by any other means, than the visible demonstration and exercise of absolute power. The effect in either case has been unpropitious to the growth of intellectual excellence. Free institutions, though favourable to the growth of intellectual excellence, are not the only thing needed. The wandering savage is free, but most of the pow-

ers of his mind lie dormant, under the severe privations of a barbarous life. An infant colony, on a distant coast, may be free, but for want of the necessary mental aliment and excitement, may be unable to rise above the limits of material existence. In order then that free institutions may have their full and entire effect, in producing the highest attainable degree of intellectual improvement, they require to be established in an extensive region, and over a numerous people. This constitutes a state of society entirely new among men ; a vast empire whose institutions are wholly popular. While we experience the genial influence of those principles, which belong to all free states, and in proportion as they are free ; independence of thought, and the right of expressing it ; we are to feel in this country, we and those who succeed us, all that excitement, which, in various ways, arises from the reciprocal action upon each other of the parts of a great empire. Literature, as has been partly hinted, is the voice of the age and the state. The character, energy, and resources of the country, are reflected and imaged forth in the conceptions of its great minds. They are the organs of the time ; they speak not their own language, they scarce think their own thoughts ; but under an impulse like the prophetic enthusiasm of old, they must feel and utter the sentiments, which society inspires. They do not create, they obey the Spirit of the Age ; the serene and beautiful spirit descended from the highest heaven of liberty, who laughs at our little preconceptions, and, with the breath of his mouth, sweeps before him the men and the nations, that cross his path. By an unconscious instinct, the mind, in the strong action of its powers, adapts itself to the number and complexion of the other minds, with which it is to enter into communion or conflict. As the voice falls into the key, which is suited to the space to be filled, the mind, in the various exercises of its creative faculties, strives with curious search for that master-note, which will awaken a vibration

from the surrounding community, and which, if it do not find, it is itself too often struck dumb.

For this reason, from the moment in the destiny of nations, that they descend from their culminating point and begin to decline, from that moment the voice of creative genius is hushed, and at best the age of criticism, learning, and imitation, succeeds. When Greece ceased to be independent, the forum and the stage became mute. The patronage of Macedonian, Alexandrian, and Pergamean princes was lavished in vain. They could not woo the healthy Muses of Hellas, from the cold mountain tops of Greece, to dwell in their gilded halls. Nay, though the fall of greatness, the decay of beauty, the waste of strength, and the wreck of power, have ever been among the favourite themes of the pensive muse, yet not a poet arose in Greece to chant her own elegy; and it is, after near three centuries, and from Cicero and Sulpicius, that we catch the first notes of pious and pathetic lamentation over the fallen land of the arts. The freedom and genius of a country are invariably gathered into a common tomb, and there

Can only strangers breathe
The name of that which was beneath.

It is when we reflect on this power of an auspicious future, that we realize the prospect, which smiles upon the intellect of America. It may justly be accounted the great peculiarity of ancient days, compared with modern, that in antiquity there was, upon the whole, but one civilized and literary nation at a time in the world. Art and refinement followed in the train of political ascendancy, from the East to Greece, and from Greece to Rome. In the modern world, under the influence of various causes, intellectual, political, and moral, civilization has been diffused throughout the greater part of Europe and America. Now mark a singular fatality as regards the connexion of this enlarged and diffused civilization, with the progress of letters and the excitement to intellectual exertion in any given state. Instead

of one sole country, as in antiquity, where the arts and refinements find a home, there are, in modern Europe, seven or eight equally entitled to the general name of cultivated nations, and in each of which some minds of the first order have appeared. And yet, by the unfortunate multiplication of languages, an obstacle all but insuperable has been thrown in the way of the free progress of genius, in its triumphant course, from region to region. The muses of Shakspeare and Milton, of Camoens, of Lope de Vega, and Calderon, of Corneille and Racine, of Dante and Tasso, of Goethe and Schiller, are strangers to each other.

This evil was so keenly felt in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that the Latin language was widely adopted as a dialect common to scholars. We see men like Luther, Calvin, and Erasmus, Bacon, Grotius, and Thuanus, who could scarce have written a line without exciting the admiration of their contemporaries, driven to the use of a tongue, which none but the learned could understand. For the sake of addressing the scholars of other countries, these great men, and others like them, in many of their writings, were obliged to cut themselves off, from all sympathy with the mass of those, whom as patriots they must have wished most to instruct. In works of pure science and learned criticism, this is of the less consequence ; for being independent of sentiment, it matters less how remote from real life the symbols, in which their ideas are conveyed. But, when we see a writer like Milton, who, more than any other, whom England ever produced, was a master of the music of his native tongue, who, besides all the eloquence of thought and imagery, knew better than any other man how to clothe them, according to his own beautiful expression,

If notes, with many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness, long drawn out,
With wanton heed and giddy cunning,
The melting voice through mazes running,
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony ;

when we see a master of English eloquence thus gifted, choosing a dead language, the dialect of the closet, a tongue without an echo from the hearts of the people, as the vehicle of his defence of that people's rights; asserting the cause of Englishmen in the language, as it may be truly called, of Cicero; we can only measure the incongruity, by reflecting what Cicero would himself have thought and felt, if called to defend the cause of Roman freedom, not in the language of the Roman citizen, but in that of the Chaldeans or Assyrians, or some people still further remote in the history of the world. There is little doubt that the prevalence of the Latin language among modern scholars, was a great cause not only of the slow progress of letters among the lower ranks, but of the stiffness and constraint formerly visible in the vernacular style of most scholars themselves. That the reformation in religion advanced with such rapidity, is doubtless in no small degree to be attributed to the translations of the Scriptures, and the use of liturgies in the modern tongues. While the preservation in England of a strange language—I will not sin against the majesty of Rome by calling it Latin—in legal acts, down to so late a period as 1730, may be one cause, that the practical forms of administering justice have not been made to keep pace with the popular views, that have triumphed in other things. With the erection of popular institutions under Cromwell, among various other legal improvements,* very many of which were speedily adopted by our plain dealing forefathers, the records of the law were ordered to be kept in English; 'A novelty,' says the learned commentator on the English laws, 'which at the restoration was no longer continued, practisers having found it very difficult to express themselves so *concisely* or significantly in any other language but Latin;† an argument for the use of that language, whose soundness it must be left to clients to estimate.

* See a number of them in Lord Somers' Tracts, vol. i.

† Blackstone's Commentaries, vol. iii. 422.

Nor are the other remedies more efficacious, which have been attempted for the evil of a multiplicity of tongues. Something is done by translations, and something by the acquisition of foreign languages. But that no effectual transfusion of the higher literature of a country can take place, in the way of translation, is matter of notoriety; and it is a remark of one of the few, who could have courage to make such a remark, Madame de Stael, that it is impossible fully to comprehend the literature of a foreign tongue. The general preference given to Young's Night Thoughts and Ossian, over all the other English poets, in many parts of the continent of Europe, seems to confirm the justice of the observation. There is, indeed, an influence of exalted genius co-extensive with the earth. Something of its power will be felt, in spite of the obstacles of different languages, remote regions, and other times. But its true empire, its lawful sway, are at home and over the hearts of kindred men. A charm, which nothing can borrow, nothing counterfeit, nothing dispense with, resides in the simple sound of our mother tongue. Not analyzed, nor reasoned upon, it unites the earliest associations of life with the maturest conceptions of the understanding. The heart is willing to open all its avenues to the language, in which its infantile caprices were soothed; and by the curious efficacy of the principal association, it is this echo from the feeble dawn of life, which gives to eloquence much of its manly power, and to poetry much of its divine charm. This feeling of the music of our native language is the first intellectual capacity that is developed in children, and when by age or misfortune,

‘ The ear is all unstrung,
Still, still, it loves the lowland tongue.’

What a noble prospect is opened in this connexion for the circulation of thought and sentiment in our country! Instead of that multiplicity of dialect, by which mental communication and sympathy are cut *off in the old world*, a continually expanding realm *is opened and opening* to American intellect, in the

community of our language, throughout the wide spread settlements of this continent. The enginery of the press will here, for the first time, be brought to bear, with all its mighty power, on the minds and hearts of men, in exchanging intelligence, and circulating opinions, unchecked by the diversity of language, over an empire more extensive than the whole of Europe.

And this community of language, all important as it is, is but a part of the manifold brotherhood, which unites and will unite the growing millions of America. In Europe, the work of international alienation, which begins in diversity of language, is carried on and consummated by diversity of government, institutions, national descent, and national prejudices. In crossing the principal rivers, channels, and mountains, in that quarter of the world, you are met, not only by new tongues, but by new forms of government, new associations of ancestry, new and generally hostile objects of national boast and gratulation. While on the other hand, throughout the vast regions included within the limits of our Republic, not only the same language, but the same laws, the same national government, the same republican institutions, and a common ancestral association prevail, and will diffuse themselves. Mankind will here exist, move, and act in a kindred mass, such as was never before congregated on the earth's surface. The necessary consequences of such a cause overpower the imagination. What would be the effect on the intellectual state of Europe, at the present day, were all her nations and tribes amalgamated into one vast empire, speaking the same tongue, united into one political system, and that a free one, and opening one broad unobstructed pathway for the interchange of thought and feeling, from Lisbon to Archangel? If effects are to bear a constant proportion to their causes; if the energy of thought is to be commensurate with the masses which prompt it, and the masses it must penetrate; if eloquence is to grow in fervor with the weight of the interest it is to plead, and the grandeur

of the assemblies it addresses ; if efforts rise with the glory that is to crown them ; in a word, if the faculties of the human mind, as we firmly believe, are capable of tension and achievement altogether indefinite ;

Nil actum reputans, dum quid superesset agendum,

then it is not too much to say, that a new era will open on the intellectual world, in the fulfilment of our country's auspices. By the sovereign efficacy of the partition of powers between the national and state governments, in virtue of which the national government is relieved from all the odium of internal administration, and the state governments are spared the conflict of foreign politics, all bounds seem removed from the possible extension of our country, but the geographical limits of the continent. Instead of growing cumbrous, as it increases in size, there never was a moment since the first settlement of Virginia, when the political system of America moved with so firm and bold a step as at the present day. If there is any faith in our country's auspices, this great continent, in no remote futurity, will be filled up with a homogeneous population ; with the mightiest kindred people known in history ; our language will acquire an extension, which no other ever possessed ; and the empire of the mind, with nothing to resist its sway, will attain an expansion, of which as yet we can but partly conceive. The vision is too magnificent to be fully borne ;—a mass of two or three hundred millions, not chained to the oar like the same number in China, by a brutalizing despotism, but held in their several orbits of nation and state, by the grand representative attraction ; bringing to bear on every point the concentrated energy of such a host ; calling into competition so many minds ; uniting into one great national feeling the hearts of so many freemen ; all to be guided, persuaded, moved, and swayed, by the master spirits of the time !

Let me not be told that this is a chimerical imagination of a future indefinitely removed ; let me not

hear repeated the ribaldry of an anticipation of 'two thousand years,'—of a vision that requires for its fulfilment a length of ages beyond the grasp of any reasonable computation. It is the last point of peculiarity in our condition, to which I invite your attention, as affecting the progress of intellect in the country, that it is growing with a rapidity hitherto entirely without example in the world. For the two hundred years of our existence, the population has doubled itself, in periods of less than a quarter of a century. In the infancy of the country, and while our numbers remained within the limits of a youthful colony, a progress so rapid as this, however important in the principle of growth disclosed, was not yet a circumstance strongly to fix the attention. But arrived at a population of ten millions, it is a fact of the most overpowering interest, that, within less than twenty-five years, these ten millions will have swelled to twenty; that the younger members of this audience will be citizens of the largest civilized state on earth; that in a few years more than one century, the American population will equal the fabulous numbers of the Chinese empire. This rate of increase has already produced the most striking phenomena. A few weeks after the opening of the Revolutionary drama at Lexington, the momentous intelligence, that the first blood was spilt, reached a party of hunters beyond the Alleghanies, who had wandered far into the western wilderness. In prophetic commemoration of the glorious event, they gave the name of Lexington to the spot of their encampment in the woods. That spot is now the capital of a state larger than Massachusetts; it is the seat of an university as fully attended as our venerable Alma Mater; nay, more, it is the capital of a state from which, in the language of one of her own citizens, whose eloquence is the ornament of his country, the tide of emigration still farther westward is more fully pouring than from any other in the union.*

* Mr. Clay's late Speech on Internal Improvements.

I need not say that this astonishing increase of numbers is by no means the limit and measure of our country's growth. Arts, agriculture, all the great national interests, all the sources of national wealth, are growing in a ratio still more rapid. In our cities the intensest activity is apparent; in the country every spring of prosperity, from the smallest improvement in husbandry to the construction of canals across the continent, is in vigorous action; abroad our vessels are beating the pathways of the ocean white; on the inland frontier, the nation is journeying on, like a healthy giant, with a pace more like romance than reality.

These facts, and thousands like them, form one of those peculiarities in our country's condition, which will have the most powerful influence on the minds of its children. The population of several states of Europe has reached its term. In some it is declining, in some stationary, and in the most prosperous, under the extraordinary *stimulus* of the last part of the eighteenth century, it doubles itself but about once in seventy-five years. In consequence of this, the process of social transmission is heavy and slow. Men, not adventitiously favoured, come late into life, and the best years of existence are exhausted in languishing competition. The man grows up, and in the stern language of one of their most renowned economists,* finds no cover laid for him at Nature's table. The smallest official provision is a boon, at which great minds are not ashamed to grasp; the assurance of the most frugal subsistence commands the brightest talents and the most laborious studies; poor wages pay for the unremitted labour of the most curious hands; and it is the smallest part of the population only that is within the reach even of these humiliating springs of action. We need not labour to contrast this state of things with the teeming growth and noble expansion of all our institutions and resources. Instead of being

* Mr. Malthus.

shut up, as it were, in the prison of a stationary, or a very slowly progressive community, the emulation of our countrymen is drawn out and tempted on, by a horizon constantly receding before them. New nations of kindred freemen are springing up in successive periods, shorter even than the active portion of the life of man. 'While we spend our time,' says Burke on this topic, 'in deliberating on the mode of governing two millions in America, we shall find we have millions more to manage.'* Many individuals are in this house, who were arrived at years of discretion when these words of Burke were uttered, and the two millions, which Great Britain was then to manage, have grown into ten, exceedingly unmanageable. The most affecting view of this subject is, that it puts it in the power of the wise, and good, and great, to gather, while they live, the ripest fruits of their labours. Where, in human history, is to be found a contrast like that, which the last fifty years have crowded into the lives of those favoured men, who, raising their hands or their voices, when our little bands were led out to the perilous conflict with one of the most powerful empires on earth, have lived to be crowned with the highest honours of the Republic, which they established? Honour to their grey hairs, and peace and serenity to the evening of their eventful days!

Though it may never again be the fortune of our country to bring within the compass of half a century a contrast so dazzling as this, yet in its grand and steady progress, the career of duty and usefulness will be run by all its children, under a constantly increasing *stimulus*. The voice which, in the morning of life, shall awaken the patriotic sympathy of the land, will be echoed back by a community, incalculably swelled in all its proportions, before it shall be hushed in death. The writer, by whom the noble features of our scenery shall be sketched with a glowing pencil, the traits of our romantic early his-

* *Speech on Conciliation with America*, March 22, 1775.

tory gathered up with filial zeal, and the peculiarities of our character seized with delicate perception, cannot mount so entirely and rapidly to success, but that ten years will add new millions to the numbers of his readers. The American statesman, the orator, whose voice is already heard in its supremacy, from Florida to Maine, whose intellectual empire already extends beyond the limits of Alexander's, has yet new states and new nations starting into being, the willing tributaries to his sway.

This march of our population westward has been attended with consequences in some degree novel, in the history of the human mind. It is a fact, somewhat difficult of explanation, that the refinement of the ancient nation seemed almost wholly devoid of an elastic and expansive principle. The arts of Greece were enchained to her islands and her coasts; they did not penetrate the interior. The language and literature of Athens were as unknown, to the north of Pindus, at a distance of two hundred miles from the capital of Grecian refinement, as they were in Scythia. Thrace, whose mountain tops may almost be seen from the porch of the temple of Minerva at Sunium, was the proverbial abode of barbarism. Though the colonies of Greece were scattered on the coasts of Italy, of France, of Spain, and of Africa, no extension of their population toward the interior took place, and the arts did not penetrate beyond the walls of the cities, where they were cultivated. How different is the picture of the diffusion of the arts and improvements of civilization, from the coast to the interior of America! Population advances westward with a rapidity, which numbers may describe indeed but cannot represent, with any vivacity, to the mind. The wilderness, which one year is impassable, is traversed the next by the caravans of the industrious emigrants, who go to follow the setting sun, with the language, the institutions, and the arts of civilized life. It is not the irruption of *wild barbarians*, come to visit the wrath of God on a *degenerate empire*; it is not the inroad of disciplined *banditti*, marshalled by the intrigues of ministers and

kings. It is the human family led out to possess its broad patrimony. The states and nations, which are springing up in the valley of the Missouri, are bound to us, by the dearest ties of a common language, a common government, and a common descent. Before New-England can look with coldness on their rising myriads, she must forget that some of the best of her own blood is beating in their veins; that her hardy children, with their axes on their shoulders, have been literally among the pioneers in this march of humanity; that young as she is, she has become the mother of populous states. What generous mind would sacrifice to a selfish preservation of local preponderance, the delight of beholding civilized nations rising up in the desert; and the language, the manners, the institutions, to which he has been reared, carried with his household gods to the foot of the Rocky Mountains? Who can forget that this extension of our territorial limits is the extension of the empire of all we hold dear; of our laws, of our character, of the memory of our ancestors, of the great achievements in our history? Whithersoever the sons of the thirteen states shall wander, to southern or western climes, they will send back their hearts to the rocky shores, the battle fields, and the intrepid councils of the Atlantic coast. These are placed beyond the reach of vicissitude. They have become already matter of history, of poetry, of eloquence:

The love, where death has set his seal,
Nor age can chill, nor rival steal,
Nor falsehood disavow.

Divisions may spring up, ill blood arise, parties be formed, and interests may seem to clash; but the great bonds of the nation are linked to what is passed. The deeds of the great men, to whom this country owes its origin and growth, are a patrimony, I know, of which its children will never deprive themselves. As long as the Mississippi and the Missouri shall flow, those men and those deeds will be remembered on their banks. The sceptre of government may go where it will; but that of patriotic feel-

ing can never depart from Judah. In all that mighty region, which is drained by the Missouri and its tributary streams—the valley co-extensive with the temperate zone—will there be, as long as the name of America shall last, a father, that will not take his children on his knee and recount to them the events of the twentieth of December, the nineteenth of April, the seventeenth of June, and the fourth of July?

This, then, is the theatre on which the intellect of America is to appear, and such the motives to its exertion ; such the mass to be influenced by its energies ; such the crowd to witness its efforts ; such the glory to crown its success. If I err, in this happy vision of my country's fortunes, I thank God for an error so animating. If this be false, may I never know the truth. Never may you, my friends, be under any other feeling, than that a great, a growing, an immeasurably expanding country is calling upon you for your best services. The name and character of our Alma Mater have already been carried by some of our brethren thousands of miles from her venerable walls ; and thousands of miles still farther westward, the communities of kindred men are fast gathering, whose minds and hearts will act in sympathy with yours.

The most powerful motives call on us as scholars for those efforts, which our common country demands of all her children. Most of us are of that class, who owe whatever of knowledge has shone into our minds, to the free and popular institutions of our native land. There are few of us, who may not be permitted to boast, that we have been reared in an honest poverty or frugal competence, and owe every thing to those means of education, which are equally open to all. We are summoned to new energy and zeal by the high nature of the experiment we are appointed in Providence to make, and the grandeur of the theatre on which it is to be performed.

When the old world afforded no longer any hope, it pleased Heaven to open this last refuge of humanity. The attempt has begun, and is going on, far from

foreign corruption, on the broadest scale, and under the most benignant auspices; and it certainly rests with us to solve the great problem in human society, to settle, and that for ever, the momentous question—whether mankind can be trusted with a purely popular system? One might almost think, without extravagance, that the departed wise and good of all places and times, are looking down from their happy seats to witness what shall now be done by us; that they who lavished their treasures and their blood of old, who laboured and suffered, who spake and wrote, who fought and perished, in the one great cause of Freedom and Truth, are now hanging from their orbs on high, over their last solemn experiment of humanity. As I have wandered over the spots, once the scene of their labours, and mused among the prostrate columns of their Senate Houses and Forums, I have seemed almost to hear a voice from the tombs of departed ages; from the sepulchres of the nations, which died before the sight. They exhort us, they adjure us to be faithful to our trust. They implore us, by the long trials of struggling humanity, by the blessed memory of the departed; by the dear faith, which has been plighted by pure hands, to the holy cause of truth and man; by the awful secrets of the prison houses, where the sons of freedom were immured; by the noble heads which have been brought to the block; by the wrecks of time, by the eloquent ruins of nations, they conjure us not to quench the light which is rising on the world. Greece cries to us, by the convulsed lips of her poisoned, dying Demosthenes; and Rome pleads with us in the mute persuasion of her mangled Tully. They address us each and all in the glorious language of Milton, to one, who might have canonized his memory in the hearts of the friends of liberty, but who did most shamefully betray the cause, *‘Reverere tantam de te expectationem, spem patriæ de te uncam. Reverere vultus et vulnere tot fortium virorum, quotquot pro libertate tam strenue decertârunt, manes etiam eorum qui in ipso certam-*

ine occubuerunt. Reverere exterarum quoque civitatum existimationem de te atque sermones; quantas res de libertate nostra tam fortiter partâ, de nostra republica tam gloriose exorta sibi polliceantur; quæ si tam cito quasi aborta evanuerit, profecto nihil æque dedecorosum huic genti atque periculosum fuerit.*

Yes, my friends, such is the exhortation which calls on us to exert our powers, to employ our time, and consecrate our labours in the cause of our native land. When we engage in that solemn study, the history of our race, when we survey the progress of man from his cradle in the East to these last limits of his wandering; when we behold him for ever flying westward from civil and religious thralldom, bearing his household gods over mountains and seas, seeking rest and finding none, but still pursuing the flying bow of promise, to the glittering hills which it spans in Hesperian climes, we cannot but exclaim with Bishop Berkeley, the generous prelate of England, who bestowed his benefactions, as well as blessings, on our country.

Westward the Star of Empire takes its way;
The four first acts already past,
The fifth shall close the drama with the day;
Time's noblest offspring is the last.

In that high romance, if romance it be, in which the great minds of antiquity sketched the fortunes of the ages to come, they pictured to themselves a favoured region beyond the ocean, a land of equal laws and happy men. The primitive poets beheld it in the islands of the blest; the Doric bards surveyed it in the Hyperborean regions; the sage of the academy placed it in the lost Atlantis; and even the sterner spirit of Seneca could discern a fairer abode of humanity, in distant regions, then unknown. We look back upon these uninspired predictions, and almost recoil from the obligation they imply. By us must these fair visions be realized, by us must be fulfilled these high auspices, which burst in trying hours

from the longing hearts of the champions of truth. There are no more continents or worlds to be revealed; Atlantis hath arisen from the ocean, the farthest Thule is reached, there are no more retreats beyond the sea, no more discoveries, no more hopes. Here then a mighty work is to be fulfilled, or never, by the race of mortals. The *man*, who looks with tenderness on the sufferings of good men in other times; the *descendants* of the pilgrims, who cherishes the memory of his fathers; the *patriot*, who feels an honest glow at the majesty of the system of which he is a member; the *scholar*, who beholds with rapture the long sealed books of unprejudiced truth expanded to all to read; these are they, by whom these auspices are to be accomplished. Yes, brethren, it is by the intellect of the country, that the mighty mass is to be inspired; that its parts are to communicate and sympathise, its bright progress to be adorned with becoming refinements, its strong sense uttered, its character reflected, its feelings interpreted to its own children, to other regions, and to after ages.

Meantime the years are rapidly passing away and gathering importance in their course. With the present year will be completed the half century from that most important era in human history, the commencement of our revolutionary war. The jubilee of our national existence is at hand. The space of time, that has elapsed from that momentous date, has laid down in the dust, which the blood of many of them had already hallowed, most of the great men to whom, under Providence, we owe our national existence and privileges. A few still survive among us, to reap the rich fruits of their labours and sufferings; and One has yielded himself to the united voice of a people, and returned in his age, to receive the gratitude of the nation, to whom he devoted his youth. It is recorded on the pages of American history, that when this friend of our country applied to our commissioners at Paris, in 1776, for a passage in the first ship they should despatch to America, they were obliged to answer him, (so low

and abject was then our dear native land,) that they possessed not the means nor the credit sufficient for providing a single vessel, in all the ports of France. Then, exclaimed the youthful hero, 'I will provide my own ;' and it is a literal fact, that when all America was too poor to offer him so much as a passage to her shores, he left, in his tender youth, the bosom of home, of happiness, of wealth, of rank, to plunge in the dust and blood of our inauspicious struggle.

Welcome, friend of our fathers, to our shores! Happy are our eyes that behold those venerable features. Enjoy a triumph, such as conqueror or monarch never enjoyed, the assurance that throughout America, there is not a bosom, which does not beat with joy and gratitude at the sound of your name. You have already met and saluted, or will soon meet, the few that remain of the ardent patriots, prudent counsellors, and brave warriors with whom you were associated in achieving our liberty. But you have looked round in vain for the faces of many, who would have lived years of pleasure on a day like this, with their old companion in arms and brother in peril. Lincoln, and Greene, and Knox, and Hamilton, are gone ; the heroes of Saratoga and Yorktown have fallen, before the only foe they could not meet. Above all, the first of heroes and of men, the friend of your youth, the more than friend of his country, rests in the bosom of the soil he redeemed. On the banks of his Potomac, he lies in glory and peace. You will revisit the hospitable shades of Mount Vernon, but him whom you venerated as we did, you will not meet at its door. His voice of consolation, which reached you in the Austrian dungeons, cannot now break its silence, to bid you welcome to his own roof. But the grateful children of America will bid you welcome, in his name. Welcome, thrice welcome to our shores; and whithersoever throughout the limits of the continent your *course* shall take you, the ear that hears you shall *bless you*, the eye that sees you shall bear witness to you, and every tongue exclaim, with heartfelt joy, *welcome, welcome La Fayette!*







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